

DRAMA



CIVIC THEATRES
HARROW'S GLOBE THEATRE
THE SPANISH SCENE

Summer, 1948

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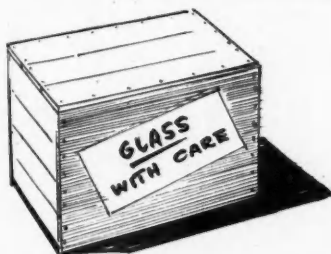
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Photo: John Vickers

"CORIOLANUS" BY THE OLD VIC

This seldom-performed Shakespeare play was produced by E. Martin Browne, the League's new Director, at the New Theatre on March 31st. Coriolanus (John Clements) is here seen delivering to Menenius (Alec Guinness) terms for the surrender of Rome, his native city, against which he leads an enemy force.

DRAMA

The Quarterly Theatre Review

NEW SERIES

MAY 1948

NUMBER 9

AT LAST! For over forty years unceasing efforts have been made to establish a British National Theatre, the lack of which has been for so long both a national disgrace and an anachronism. The movement began with a meeting of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee in May, 1906. Most of the eminent theatre people of that time were present, together with a large contingent of prominent citizens in other walks of life. It was at the close of this meeting that Bernard Shaw, when invited to speak, rose to make his famous *mot*, "Ladies and Gentlemen, the subject is not exhausted but we are," and promptly resumed his seat. The words, indeed, were prophetic. For in spite of Sir Carl Meyer's initial donation of £70,000, the appeal languished with the advent of the first world war. But the Committee never gave up hope, and worked strenuously behind the scenes. Members of the Drama League in particular will remember how at Conference after Conference resolutions in support of the project were proposed and carried; and to speakers like the late Lord Lytton (Vice-President of the League), Dame Edith Lyttelton and the late Holford Knight, M.P. (members of our Council) a great deal is due for what they did to maintain the project as an ideal in the minds of the public. Moreover, for many years the business of the National Theatre Committee was transacted from the League's Headquarters, and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth combined the Directorship of the League with the Hon. Secretaryship of the National Theatre Committee. Now the recent fusion between that Committee and the Old Vic, under the name of "The Joint Council," coupled with the offer by the London County Council of a magnificent site on the South Bank of the Thames, has brought matters to a head, and the Government, realising that it was a case of now or never, have risen nobly to the occasion with their promise of a State contribution of one million pounds, the estimated cost of the building. Thus the prospect is now secure, and the League, which has played no small part in furthering this happy result, joins in the general cheers which have greeted its announcement. All the more heartily, perhaps, since rate-aided support for Civic Theatres is now also to be permitted wherever such enterprise may commend itself to the Local Authority.

PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

by Philip Hope-Wallace

NOT all the plays to reach the London stage since the last issue have been American, though they loom large in any list. One or two have been effectively disguised, if not effectively helped, by being played in English, which—it should be beginning to be realised—is a different language. For example, Clifford Odets' *Rocket to the Moon* (St. Martin's and a novelty, though really pre-war) lost most of its quality of which there was perhaps not a great deal to spare in any case. This study of a dentist and his temptation to indulge in a fugue with a typist, leaving his nagging, loyal wife behind in a New York heatwave, has a fairly strong emotional climate, but it depends on all manner of hardly-spoken, social nuances, and so on, which mean absolutely nothing when half the cast is acting in what is for them a foreign language. The patterns didn't crystallise, and though Yolande Donlan was enchanting in her own right as very much the same sort of little hard-head as in *Born Yesterday*, she perhaps hardly prepared us for Mr. Odets' Pygmalion-like finale, where the baggage shows she too has aspirations and walks out. Somewhere the "feel" of the play was missed, and much of the failure is due to no other cause but the unlike-likeness of the two languages.

No such mishap occurred with *Diamond Lil*, Mae West's fantastic melodrama which she wrote to parade in. If the whole of it were burlesqued as she, quite consciously, burlesques her own legendary personality it is possible one would have had here something more than a curiosity, namely the burlesque which so many clever young people have so long been seeking at the Players' Theatre and elsewhere.

I Remember Mama, Van Druten's sure-fire Broadway family-play (Adelphi), wisely imported the lead with it—Mady Christians, who gives a good performance as the often pathetic, always practical materfamilias of a Norwegian emigrants' family in San Francisco in the early years of the century. True the rest of the family sounded Teutonic rather than Scandinavian, but there was much lively theatrical characterisation and much gusto in the playing of Mr. Valk, as the reprobate uncle and Misses Kann, Frank and Adrienne Gessner as the aunts. The series of peeps into the family album makes a curiously episodic and unsatisfactory evening, but laughter and tears are won from us by Van Druten's wonderfully sure touch.

American too, is *Dark Eyes* (Strand) by two Russian actresses remembered here, Mesdames Miramova and Leontovitch who offer an amusing high-spirited light comedy on the lasting joke that all foreigners are funny. Three

highly temperamental Russian ladies descend on a starchy Long Island household and set it by the ears with their tantrums, moods and enthusiasms. There is a lack of invention, the plot totters along, but the joke seems inexhaustible. Mesdames Baronova and Delarova whom we used to see revolving in the Ballet Russe, here spin it out nicely and an American, Polly Rowles, makes a Russian third. For propriety, there is Edwin Styles and Genine Graham, and the clash of temperaments seems real enough.

English light comedy at its most conventional is represented by Noel Langley's *Little Lambs Eat Ivy* (Ambassadors). This is the one about the family who are one long scream; the scene is a lounge-hall in perpetual turmoil; the heroine is a charmingly vague and dishonest upper class lady (Joan Haythorne); there is an expectant father; a refined midwife; temperamental daughters; and even—stockiest of all stock figures—the family doctor who is also the old admirer. Everyone has plenty to do and—it is greatly to the play's credit—is able to do it generously, even to a point of embarrassment when the piece tries to take itself seriously. But wit, truth or any sort of sense of values do not often rear their ugly heads. Jonquil Anthony hit on a happy idea for a farce in which—again—stock types burn their fingers playing at witch craft, a Bolton's theatre success called *Hog's Blood and Hellebore*. At the Apollo in *The Happiest Days of Your Life* John Dighton shows himself already a master of the difficult and not to be despised art of farce-making and shows us Miss Rutherford, a headmistress of the utmost probity, enmeshed in appalling lies as she tries to conceal the fact that her school has mistakenly been boarded on a boy's school. This, with true farcical lines (piffle on paper no doubt) was real farce, played with complete earnestness; one notable performance was given by Colin Gordon as an exasperated maths master. Unfortunately *Dandy Dick* (Lyric), perhaps Pinero's best farce, suffered from the delusion that its was also in some way a burlesqued Victorian play, some of the characters letting-on that they knew they were funny and so killing the true farcical element. Denys Blakelock was often very good as the tormented dean; Joan Young less good as his horsey sister; Lyn Evans was wonderfully good as the village constable, but the whole had far less style than one might have expected from a production by Athene Seyler. A wholly unfarcical school was the scene of *The Hidden Years*, by one Travers Otway (also a Bolton's promotion); this overlong, but well-exposed, and finally touching story was a study of one of those romantic friendships between boys of different ages which, wrongly handled by a bad schoolmaster can turn to disaster. The atmosphere is convincing; the playing, if not remarkable, told well and on the whole the piece made a valuable serious contribution to a weak theatrical account.

Perhaps the most interesting play in this account is Peter Ustinov's *The Indifferent Shepherd*, somewhat ineffectively written around a highly interesting set of characters (what a sense of stage character this writer has!) and the

highly interesting idea of the "value of the futile"; i.e., the unpractical clergyman (a poor pastor and an inadequate husband) who yet has the imagination to rise to the situation of his unhappy wife's infidelity. Francis Lister plays this figure; Gladys Cooper, the wife whose emotional crisis is the catalyst; and there are a number of other good performances of the practical man (or forces' padre) apparently so strong really so weak; the apparently feeble, but really tough little Bohemian, etc. One is interested, yet the play as a play most certainly fails to work; where a Pinero would have extracted the utmost from such a situation (and it is very much, superficially, in the high drawing room drama style), the drama only comes to us in fits and starts.

The Old Vic Company has given us two more highly commendable revivals; John Burrell's revival of *The Government Inspector*, by Gogol, had a charming decor by Topolski, but was generally found too fantastical so that the satire misfired (an alternative view was that the piece needed even more, and much more brutal fantastification!). It seemed longer than one had remembered, but much pleasure was given by Alec Guinness's M. Verdoux-like little clerk who finds the honours of the corrupt village loaded upon him. Some of the playing strayed into caricature. *Coriolanus*, produced by E. Martin Browne, had many good points, not least the intelligence of John Clements' playing of the unsympathetic hero for which however he somehow lacked the fire and patrician presence. Once again Alec Guinness caught the imagination with a wonderfully composed and detailed portrait of the sharp old statesman, Menenius; Rosalind Atkinson (Volumnia), Audius (Harry Andrews), and the Tribunes of Peter Copley and Mark Dignam were well placed. The play, for topical reasons or not, was voted unexpectedly exciting. It completes the Old Vic's present season.

Two women playwrights who have met with only qualified success in recent weeks are Margaret Kennedy and Romilly Cavan. The former offers in *Happy with Either* at the St. James's one of those light domestic comedies which will always find some kind of an audience, but tend to bore regular playgoers unless they are either good vehicles for some beloved star, or bring an extra pressure of high spirits or moral concern to the familiar scene. Miss Kennedy doesn't. Actresses as good as Angela Baddeley and Valerie Taylor have only rather flat, subsiding little scenes, and the charming fellow who has "married" both of them and returns to find them amicably united against him is too weakly drawn to make the re-settling of the emotional pattern of any great moment. For *Royal Circle*, at Wyndham's, Miss Cavan has the fortune to have Sir Ralph Richardson in the lead, who gives an amusing picture of a King of Ruritania whose troubles with kingship, and the warring world about him make what play there is. Paradoxically, if a lesser player had been playing the part we might have thought more of it! So too, the play suffers by inevitable, if unfair, comparisons with the sort of play that Shaw might and almost did write on the same subject.

CIVIC THEATRES

by Norman Marshall

THE struggle for the establishment of Civic Theatres has begun. A clause in the local Government Act now empowers local authorities to spend annually the product of a rate not exceeding sixpence in the pound on "the provision of an entertainment of any nature or of facilities for dancing"; and on the "provision of a theatre, concert hall or other premises suitable for the giving of entertainments or the holding of dances."

This clause, authorising the annual expenditure of eight million pounds of public money on entertainment, has aroused considerable apprehension, not only among the antagonists of any form of civic patronage of the theatre, but also among those who for years have been urging the establishment of Civic Theatres throughout the country. The antagonists belong to three main groups. Theatrical managers who regard subsidised entertainment as unfair competition; ratepayers who seldom go to any form of entertainment and resent their money being spent on something from which they will derive no direct benefit; and those who oppose any kind of State or Civic support for the drama because they fear it may eventually result in the theatre being used as a mouthpiece for official propaganda. On the other hand, those who believe in the principle of Civic support for the theatre feel that the powers now granted to local authorities are so wide and so loosely defined that much of this money may be frittered away on "municipal hops," pierrot shows in the parks, and the kind of entertainments which were provided by Town Councils during the "Holidays at Home" campaign.

Before discussing how the powers now granted to local authorities can best be used it is important to examine the arguments of the opposition, because the first attempts to use these powers are going to meet with opposition which will be intense and highly organised.

The largest section of the opposition consists of ratepayers who object to be asked to pay for other people's entertainments. Because they themselves do not wish to go to the theatre or to concerts they see no reason why they should be expected to contribute to the cost of these entertainments. But it has for long been an accepted principle that expenditure from the rates should not be limited solely to amenities that are enjoyed by every member of the community. For instance, I as a ratepayer contribute towards the cost of municipal baths I do not use, to the upkeep of parks in which I never walk, tennis courts and playing fields on which I never play, and libraries from which I

never borrow a book. These and other amenities enjoyed by only a section of the ratepayers are accepted as a just and proper charge on the rates because they are regarded as part of the essential services of a well run community. Surely it is not unreasonable to argue that a town should have a theatre as well as a public library and an art gallery, and that if private enterprise has not provided the town with a theatre, or has sold the theatre to the film industry, or uses it merely to provide a monotonous succession of twice-nightly touring revues, then it is the plain duty of the Local Authority to provide a theatre as one of the amenities of the town.

Here we come up against another section of the opposition, the theatrical managers. In a letter circularised to all members of Parliament they protest that we "regard it as grossly unfair that as ratepayers we should have to contribute sixpence in the pound in order to enable our Local Authority to put us out of business by unfair competition." But no Local Authority is likely to use ratepayers' money to compete with local managements where those managements are already providing the public with sufficiently varied entertainment. For instance, the Brighton Town Council would find it very hard to make out a case for spending money on theatrical entertainment in a town where seven theatres cater for the tastes of every sort of theatregoer, though it would be justified in opening a cinema for the showing of the kind of film to be seen in London at the Academy, Studio One, the Curzon, the Ritz and similar houses, because this kind of film can very rarely be seen in Brighton. On the other hand, there would be every justification for Manchester spending public money on the provision of a Civic Theatre, because for many weeks in the year it is impossible to see a professional performance of a play in Manchester except at a small and inadequately housed repertory theatre. Private enterprise provides Manchester with only one theatre for the performance of straight plays, and for a considerable part of the year this theatre is occupied by pantomime, musical comedy and revue.

There are many towns in England where the solitary theatre never presents a straight play from one year's end to the other. During every week of the year it is occupied by twice-nightly touring revues, thinly disguised for a week or two at Christmas as pantomimes. The owners of these theatres have used their monopoly merely to cater for a single class of theatre-goer; they have shown no sense of responsibility to the community as a whole; so they have only themselves to blame if the Local Authority enters into competition with them by providing more varied theatrical fare for the more intelligent section of the community.

But there are towns in far worse plight, places where there is no professional theatre of any kind. By no means all of these are the smaller towns. Some of them have a population of over a hundred thousand. There are large tracts of England where it is impossible for the inhabitants to see live professional

entertainment, even if they are prepared to journey many miles from their homes. The Theatre Managers, in their circular letter, give the generous assurance that they "do not wish to discourage the provision of opportunities for theatrical entertainment in places where it is not adequately provided at the present time," but add darkly that "in a matter of this kind considerable care is needed if irreparable damage is not to be done to the best interests of the British theatre in the long run."

Presumably this somewhat mysterious warning refers to the danger of subsidised entertainment being used for propaganda purposes. Which brings us to the third party in the opposition, who argue that the theatre will be used to propagate the opinions of the political party with a controlling majority on the Town Council. This is a danger of which everybody is so conscious that any Council attempting to use the theatre in this way would at once cause a storm of criticism. But those who make so much of this danger overlook the fact that there are a number of theatres in this country which are already controlled by the local authority without any sinister results. The Local Government Act is merely extending to all towns powers which were previously granted only to some of the holiday resorts. For many years these towns have been permitted to spend money from the rates on entertainment, and some of them, such as Blackpool, Torquay and Bournemouth, have used the money to build and run theatres. The policy of these theatres has been simply to choose their programme from the tours sent out by London managements.

The Civic Theatre of the future will presumably rely at least to some extent on touring companies. It will have a company of its own, but if the theatre is run for the benefit of the surrounding districts as well as for the town itself, the resident company will frequently be on tour while another company takes its place at the theatre. Although it will be some years before it is possible to build new theatres, there are in most towns, buildings which could be converted into theatres. Or an existing theatre could be leased. In many towns there are pleasant old theatres which are being run as cinemas. At Kidderminster such a theatre has been reclaimed by means of money raised from local subscriptions and a grant from the Arts Council. There is a resident company which plays one week in four (touring the other three) leaving the theatre free for visiting companies most of the month. Each year there is a season of six weeks given over to the amateurs. The directors claim with some justification that their theatre is the first of a new category, steering a middle course between private enterprise and public control.

There are towns where the local repertory theatre could be developed into a Civic Theatre. But there is a danger that the Local Authority may think it has done all that it need for the drama by giving a small grant to the repertory theatre, a grant not sufficient to make any appreciable difference to the standard of work. It is doubtful whether it is worth spending money on any

weekly repertory company unless the grant can be used to enable the company to escape from the drudgery of the play-a-week system either by extending their runs or exchanging visits with neighbouring repertory companies.

The Theatre Industry Journal suggests another way in which a grant could be used. "If a Civic Authority is not satisfied that the public demand is being adequately met, or that the quality of the plays presented is not of the high standard required, then we feel sure that arrangements could be made with the local theatre to set aside a period, say three months in the year, during which cultural or educational plays would be given subject to the Municipality guaranteeing the management against loss." In several towns seasons of this sort have been given in the past under a guarantee raised from private subscriptions, but it was invariably found that in the early weeks of the season attendances were poor, steadily increasing week by week until just when the idea had caught on, the season had to come to an end. When the experiment was repeated the following year it was found that the task of building up an audience had to be begun all over again. If a public library were to make its best books available for only three months each year one would hardly be surprised if the users of the library failed to develop a steady and lasting interest in good books.

A better plan than the one suggested by *The Theatre Industry Journal* would be to disperse the visits by subsidised companies over the whole year. The ordinary theatre-goer would probably see these shows in the course of his regular visits to the theatre, while he would be likely to stay away from the theatre during a special season of plays suspected of being "cultural and educational." The difficulty of such a scheme is that the towns in which it would be most valuable are those where the only theatre is at present devoted entirely to twice nightly revues, and there are obvious drawbacks to frequent changes between twice nightly and once nightly performances.

The argument against any such scheme will be the old one that if people really want anything they will pay for it, and that entertainment which has to be subsidised is entertainment which is not wanted. That is true enough up to a point. It may not be wanted *at first*. Playgoing is an acquired taste. The first plays sent out during the war by ENSA drew poor audiences, but in a comparatively short time a play could draw as large an audience as any variety show. Most repertory theatres have had to struggle desperately to gain an audience during the first years. Civic Theatres schemes may begin by losing money heavily, but there is every possibility that they will, if properly run, become self-supporting.

So far nothing has been said about the British Drama League's own Civic Theatre Scheme, first issued in 1942, and endorsed by many eminent people both in the theatre and outside. This Scheme is ambitious and refers especially to theatres employing a permanent company. It is suggested that

the actual management of such a theatre should be in the hands of a professional director, supported by a small management committee. This committee would be independent of, but responsible to, the Governing Trustees, who would be appointed by the appropriate Local Authority. It is envisaged that the Theatre would be financed either entirely from the rates, or by a combination of rate-aid and voluntary subscription. The Scheme as a whole contains many important and well-considered recommendations and should be consulted by any Municipality which seriously considers the foundation of a Civic Theatre on a scale comparable to that adopted by many towns and cities on the Continent.

HARROW'S GLOBE THEATRE

by Ronald Watkins

IN October, 1940, an incendiary bomb lodged in the roof of Harrow School Speech Room, and before the fire could be extinguished, the mechanism of the fore-curtain and floodlights was damaged. This literally heaven-sent opportunity confronted Harrovian actors with something like the conditions of the Elizabethan theatre. A series of progressive experiments in recapturing the lost poetic drama of Shakespeare began in 1941 with *Twelfth Night*, which was presented in the light of day (artificially reinforced but representing the afternoon sky of the Elizabethan yard) on a bare platform with a curtained inset at the back. *Henry the Fifth* followed in 1942, and *Macbeth* in 1943, both plays which have elaborate night-scenes; the power of the poetry alone and the miming of the actors created the darkness, and ghosts and apparitions were not afraid to appear in the steady light of Speech Room; the furniture of the inset and the properties were no more than was needed by the action and the words of the text; use was made in both plays of the well in the centre of Speech Room, so that the actors were often close to and in the midst of their audience. In 1944 the more violent assault of the flying bombs interrupted the annual sequence; *The Merchant of Venice* had to be abandoned within a fortnight of production. With boy-actors playing the women's parts as in 1600, a memorable Lady Macbeth was to have found a memorable successor in the unlucky Portia.

Before the following summer a copy of Dr. John Cranford Adams' exhaustive study of *The Globe Playhouse: its design and equipment* had reached the Hill. Half an hour with a tape-measure in Speech Room showed that it was possible, by building a scaffolding over the well, to reproduce almost exactly the dimensions of the Globe platform and its situation in the midst of the playhouse. On this new stage *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed in

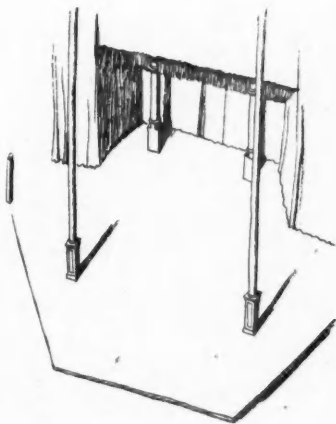
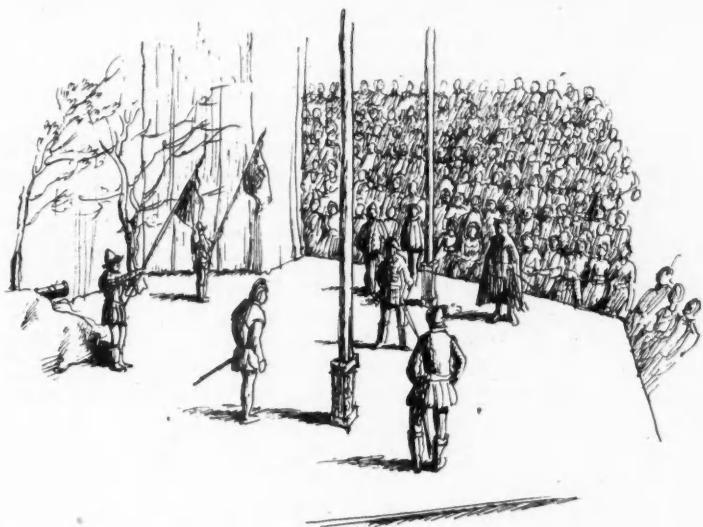
1945, and a prologue written for the occasion, and spoken by an actor representing Shakespeare himself, gave some account of the previous history of the series and the scope and purpose of these experiments. These are some of the lines which the poet addressed to his constant audience :

*Here in this room, in nineteen forty-one,
For the first time your miracle was done.
You told yourselves that what my plays most needed
Was simply to present them just as we did—
No curtain here in front, no darkened hall,
No scenery, no lights, nothing at all.
Three times you proved, in every play you heard,
My sharpest weapon is the spoken word.
You saw Olivia's garden by this spell,
Sir Toby's cellar and Malvolio's cell;
Harfeur was sieged and taken in this room,
The eve of Agincourt spread here its gloom;
Words made the midnight of King Duncan slain
And brought tall Birnam wood to Dunsinane.
In such a night Lorenzo was to woo
Last year the pretty daughter of the Jew;
But that the bombast of the flying menace
Shook the foundations of Belmont and Venice.*

*Now once again I view this well-loved scene—
How like a winter bath my absence been !
See with new joy this noble scaffoldage—
Burbage himself would know this for a stage;
And on this day of blest reunion, I
Bring you my old enchanted comedy,
Ask you to dream away two summer hours—
Titania's dream? or Bottom's? mine, or yours?
No matter—if you let a poet's spell
Work its own magic charm, all will be well.
Forget this summer's day that this is Speecher:
Let me transform you each familiar feature,
The pillars pine-trees and the arching roof
Haunted with owls, webbed with the spider's woof;
Here in this daylight let the moon prevail
And cast deep shadows over hill and dale.
Such tricks imagination comprehends;
Listen to Theseus, as this evening ends.*

The following year (1946) for *Julius Caesar* there were added to the platform the two pillars supporting the "heavens," which were so conspicuous a feature of the Globe design. The Romans, like the Athenians of the year before, wore Elizabethan dress; even the fairies had aped with their woodland materials the fashion of ruff, doublet and hose, and now the conspirators evoked memories of Guy Fawkes or the Babington plot. The Roman mob, only a dozen strong but individually characterised, infected their neighbours

*The First Part of "King Henry IV" as presented
at Harrow School, 1947*



Speech Room is a semi-circular building with a seating-plan like a Greek theatre: the "well" at the front of the stage is bridged over with planks to make a tapering platform of approximately the same size and shape as that of the Globe playhouse. The curtained inset at the back of the platform represents the Elizabethan "study" in which solid furniture could be "discovered." The forward pillars on the platform are made of pine-trunks.

in the audience, and Antony seemed to sway the whole theatre with his oratory. The sunset of Philippi field was a moving epilogue for the lost cause of the idealist conspirators; on the bare unlocalised stage, the poetry was allowed to have the powerful effect Shakespeare had designed for it:

O setting Sunne:

As in thy red Rayes thou doest sinke to night;

So in his red blood Cassius day is set.

The Sunne of Rome is set. Our day is gone,

Clouds, Dewes, and Dangers come.

Last year (1947) *Henry the Fourth, Part One*, showed Falstaff on the front edge of the platform winning the collusion of his audience at close quarters—an intimate contact which the music-halls of today could not but envy. For this coming July *King Lear* is projected—the sternest test of all. No sooner is one play packed away than the next is under discussion. Thus a tradition grows, and with it a repertory, constant through its changing generations, claiming distant kinship with the Chamberlain's Men.

It is a simple faith that inspires these performances. Shakespeare was a practising man of the theatre: the company for which he wrote his plays, the Chamberlain's Men—largely because of his contribution—was the most successful of his time in London. Their chief theatre, built in 1599, was devised to suit the wishes of a syndicate of seven leading members of the company—Shakespeare himself being one. To that extent, the design has the *imprimatur* of the great man himself. Some of his greatest plays were written for this theatre, almost all were performed in it. The flat picture-stage of today is the direct descendant of the Restoration theatre, but has little relation to the Elizabethan platform-stage. It seems then common sense that, if we can recapture the essential conditions of the Globe theatre, and visualise his plays in those conditions, we shall understand the dramatic genius of Shakespeare as never before. William Poel at the beginning of this century made many experiments in recapturing these conditions; but few in these days will have been lucky enough to see the performances of the Elizabethan Stage Society. Granville-Barker was a great advocate of the Elizabethan theatre, but—perhaps by force of circumstance—his contribution to the cause was mainly on paper rather than in practice. It is impossible in this connection not to mention the long tradition of Mr. Nugent Monck's Maddermarket Theatre at Norwich. Across the Atlantic similar ventures are now a regular feature of the theatrical year at Illinois University. Yet none of these experiments, it seems, have accepted all the implications of the belief that Shakespeare knew what he was about, and that he wrote for an unlocalised stage of the size, shape and situation which Dr. Adams has made known to us, for a performance in steady daylight, with boy-actors in the female parts. Accepting these conditions, and fulfilling them as nearly as the resources permit, Harrow School attempts to realise the plays as they have not been seen since the closing of the theatres in 1642.

How can a school do this? The question can be understood in two ways : indignantly, as a rebuke to vaulting ambition, and literally, as an enquiry into means. To propitiate nemesis, let it be said at once that these experiments do not compete with the professional theatre. They have to make their way amid the conflicting claims and distractions of school life ; the actors are inexperienced, their technique is only in the making. But each production is undertaken with the single-minded purpose of making it as near as possible to what Shakespeare intended. There are two points of reference for the solving of all problems—what did the Chamberlain's Men do ? and what did Shakespeare mean ? Ultimately Shakespeare is the only person that matters. In this endeavour the Harrow repertory are doing something which the professional stage is not doing, perhaps cannot in the nature of things do—at least until some *impresario* of vision will rebuild and endow Shakespeare's Globe. And the thing they are doing is a thing which certainly ought to be done, both at Stratford and in London, and anywhere else where Shakespeare's name is honoured in performance. Perhaps if they do it long enough, and if other schools and other repertories do likewise, the value of the method and the need for it will become established fact, and Granville-Barker's dream will come into being at last. It was he who wrote (in his essay, *From Henry V to Hamlet*) :

"Can such a theatre be brought to being? How can we say till we have tried. But as Shakespeare never ceased to be the practical playwright and man of the theatre the chances are, perhaps, that it can. Only, however, I believe, by providing for some continuance of that guild of grave and sober men of reputation to whom the work was first a gift. A gift too great for them, perhaps ; is it still too great a one for us? Or can we, after three centuries, amid all this tribute to Shakespeare as the marvel of our race, contrive to make his art at its noblest a living thing?"

And the answer to the literal question is this : it is a spare-time activity at school—as games are, and like them no worse for that ; the best games too need organisation. The conditions are really very favourable. There is a ready-made community from which to build a permanent repertory ; the right tradition will grow from year to year ; the boy-apprentices of one year will be the Burbages and Heminges and Armins of the next. All sections of the school are involved in a co-operative undertaking—the music school, the art school, the workshop, the J.T.C. for military manoeuvres, the science school for apparitions, the school farm for rushes and foliage and other outdoor furniture, the gym for fencing bouts. There is room among the cast for comedians and athletes as well as poets and intellectuals—your best cast will be made, like your best audience, of all the elements. The judicious few among the boys grow year by year more clearly aware of the truth, that they are doing pioneer work : if they don't, it doesn't matter very much, for they absorb it in their bones, and the tradition grows. About art, in the largest sense, they learn

integrity—to subdue personal and selfish ambitions and vanities to a whole-hearted desire to understand, interpret and communicate the work of a great artist: and about life they learn—unconsciously, but surely enough—from Shakespeare himself. The weeks of preparation for such an undertaking evoke many overtones—not in formal lectures only, but in casual conversation—and there is nothing to equal the ultimate thrill when two or three days before the performance Shakespeare himself seems to arrive on his annual visit and take charge of things. Then the whole stagecraft of the poetic dramatist is laid bare, as never before. Then too, at stock-taking time, the long process of study, preparation, rehearsal and performance seems to be a kind of education—of body, mind and spirit—surely not less valuable than the regular activities which lie within the sacred precinct of the curriculum.

THE SPANISH SCENE

by Ashley Dukes

THE theatres of Madrid play twice nightly at 7.0 (afternoon) and 11.0 (evening) and a week of fourteen performances is usual, though a Monday closing or a single evening performance may vary the routine. Plays are produced for a run of a few weeks, seldom extended to months. Repertory stages are unimportant and emphasis is laid on the private nature of the stage undertaking. The players are important people whose names are in large headlines, and unless the author be very well known, his name is hard to find on the playbill or the poster.

With some twenty playhouses always open, the system argues a Spanish love of theatrical art for its own sake; but conservative habit plays a part as well. Madrid follows the conventions of a static society to which civil or world wars are incidental events. In dining at ten o'clock as regularly as it lunches at two or two-thirty, the city determines the hour of the play. Older people dine after the fall of the curtain, younger people before it rises on the second nightly house. The players dine in between the shows, and one meets them in the little restaurants at the back of wine-shops where they sit wearing their make-up and sometimes their costumes of the stage.

Rather strangely, there is no national opera house to concentrate this social interest of an eternally curious and talkative community. The former home of the Italian opera, the nearest approach to a Spanish Covent Garden, stands on the Plaza de Oriente opposite the deserted Royal Palace. Both were in full view of the besiegers' lines during the Civil War and their quarter was lightly bombarded; but a nation with an operative tradition would soon have made good the damage. Stage musical activity in Spain is confined to highly



A Spanish conversation in a Contemporary Comedy.
(May 1947.)

respectable hotch-potches of provincial (mostly Andalusian) folksong and dance.

The playhouses are of Western type and mostly modern, though rats are common at the stage end. The auditorium derives a certain Moorish character from the iron openwork of the gallery fronts and the replacement of the orchestra pit by rows of seats facing each other at right angles to the stage; these are the last places to be sold and the people sitting in them lend their own animation to a full house. At ground level, long rows of side-boxes flank the stalls. The tip-up seats are old-fashioned, the intervals long and the foyers only just large enough for the talkers who throng them. The prices are just one-half those of Paris or London (stalls say, six or seven shillings, and the rest in proportion), and the Spaniards, one is assured, will not consent to pay more than these figures which are inherited from a past generation. The economic yield of two nightly houses is in fact about equal to that of one in any other European capital; but the public is faithful and managers and even dramatic authors contrive to flourish.

Two of the Madrid theatres receive a subsidy and a remission of entertainment tax. Of the rest, perhaps the majority are run for (or by) a leading actress; and it follows that most of the pieces are actress-vehicles and little more. The scarcity of classic parts for women in the modern drama is nowhere better known or more lamented than in this city, where in practice only the more temperamental heroines of D'Annunzio can be suited to the taste of actress and audience together. Certainly such characters as Nora, Hedda or even Magda are of little use to her. Saint Joan would be almost incomprehensible. A fairly rigid censorship would in any event restrain the leading lady from straying on to ground incompatible with the traditional spirit of the Spanish stage and its themes drawn from convention, religion, family duty and so forth. But within these limitations, graceful and well-dressed artists keep their hold upon the public and dominate their stage with little control from the producer or director as the Western theatre world knows him.

In this climate original drama can hardly be said to find encouragement. Jacinto Benavente, whose *Los Interesses Creados* is one of the comedies of our century, has had little to say in the forty years since it was written. The late Garcia de Lorca is rarely played, though his political history is no longer a bar to performance; one would rather judge that he is too disturbing a writer for the current Spanish taste. Younger contemporary talents are few; one of them is Jaquin Calvo Sotelo whose *Plaza de Oriente* forms a chronicle of Spanish life over half a century. Luis Escobar as director presents this kind of play with impressive effect.

Dramas about successive generations are in general popular, and their vogue must have something to do with the static character of social life. Where in reality nothing changes, make-believe can please by showing a movement through time. Priestley is known in Madrid for his *Time and the Conways*,

One of the semi-religious, semi-pagan processions of Seville.

(May 1947.)



and Benn Levy's *Mrs. Moonlight*, which came on during my visit, scored a modest success as another variant of the "milestone" theme of the generations. Actors enjoy such plays for their opportunities of make-up and character-playing, arts particularly cultivated in Madrid. Not the youthful hero, but the man-of-the-world in his fifties with pointed beard and urbane gesture, seems to rule the masculine stage.

Players take their long working week for granted, and doubtless they find this easier because they have no afternoon performances as other countries understand them. If they come home by the last underground train at three in the morning, they need not show themselves at the theatre until the evening of next day. They may even have time to attend that other Spanish theatre in the shape of the bull ring, where the first of the six *corridos* begins in late afternoon and the last ends at dusk; or the pelota court where professionals of both sexes contend from noon to midnight before an excited concourse of male fans and bookmakers.

In Seville life itself is so theatrical, thanks to the great Catholic processions and secular cavalcades, that the theatre has fallen into oblivion more or less; and it seems that cosmopolitan Barcelona is the only rival to Madrid. Certainly in Toledo, or Aranjuez, or Segovia or Salamanca, there is little remaining prospect for the living stage. But in the capital dramatic art remains alive, though needing urgently a breath of northern-European air.

JESTERS AND JUGGLERS AND CLOWNS

by Robert G. Newton

A RECENT variety programme at the London Palladium, headed by the captivating Danny Kaye, proved, if there was any need to do so, what excellent entertainment a good Music Hall show can be. When, however, we survey the whole field of variety, what pleasure and fun do we get from the average show? Where are the comedians, singers and composers? Of course we have outstanding personalities like Syd Field and Bud Flanagan, but the fare provided at most Music Halls is pretty anaemic. No doubt there are many who consider this unimportant. But surely popular entertainment is, and has always been, a vital factor in a nation's theatrical life. The strolling players of the Middle Ages were as much part of the theatrical scene as is "Itma" today. And how fascinating the story of popular entertainment is from its beginnings in Europe in the twelfth century and onwards. The early gleemen, with their harps, regaled all and sundry, telling them heroic epics like the legend of Beowulf. To them were soon added jugglers, dancers and tumblers. One of the most delightful of medieval tales, "The Tumbler of Our Lady," is about a tumbler who, weary of the world, became a monk. He soon found himself out of place amongst his more learned and contemplative brethren. The only way in which he could justify his existence was by performing tricks in front of the altar of Our Lady—"not for mine own sake, but for yours and above all for the sake of your Son." In time the more accomplished of the strolling players became troubadours, intimate with royalty and with the great barons. Tradition has it that one Blondel, attached to Richard the First, was responsible for finding the king when the latter, returning from a crusade, had been imprisoned in a remote Danube fortress. This miscellaneous collection of entertainers did not exist to entertain only the nobility: they also played their part in the peasant's struggles against oppression. Unfortunately they added anti-social habits, such as pocket-picking and stealing, to their more legitimate accomplishments and in 1572 an Act of Parliament made them "Rogues and Vagabonds."

"Beggars they are with one consent
And Rogues by Act of Parliament."

It was in France that the troubadours had the greatest influence on national literature, but in Italy that the "Rogues and Vagabonds" had the greatest

influence on the theatre. There, in the fifteenth century, a familiar figure at the fairs and markets was the quack doctor—a curious mixture of astrologer, magician and showman who made good use of dramatic stunts to sell his patent cures, love songs and drugs. His supporting caste, so to speak, might consist of juggler, acrobat and performing animals. Here, for instance, is a fantastic cure for toothache. "Hold a ripe apple in your mouth and put your head in the oven. Before the apple is cooked, your toothache will be gone !"

In 1520 Angelo Beolco co-ordinated these theatrical oddments from which developed the *Commedia dell' Arte*, the most successful and accomplished form of improvised theatre the world has known. In Venice, at the time, certain members of the aristocracy and learned men from the academy established an intellectual amateur theatre which had considerable influence on the *Commedia dell' Arte*: the *Commedia* coveted the literary prestige of the intellectual and princely world, whereas the latter found in improvisation a fascinating diversion. The stock characters of the *Commedia*—crafty and cunning though most of them were—have assured places amongst immortal stage personalities: the old Venetian Magnifico, Pantaloon, with his familiar loose slippers and wagging finger; the pompous Doctor who made long, erudite speeches in his attempt to keep up-to-date and the swaggering Captain. And Harlequin—agile, with graceful cat-like movements, his slim body covered with coloured lozenges and brandishing a wooden sword—Harlequin the favourite of the *Commedia* characters and the one with the most far-reaching influence on popular shows in this country.

With the growing popularity of fairs in England there was increasing scope for the strolling players, made rogues and vagabonds in 1572: jugglers, musicians, ballad-singers; puppet shows and booths with Morris-dancing dogs, mermaids and the familiar fat woman.

"Here's Whittington's Cat and the tall dromedary,
The chaise without horses and the Queen of Hungary."

Bartholomew Fair was, perhaps, the best known; immortalized by both Hogarth and Ben Jonson. But Bartholomew Fair was not only the play-ground of the humbler citizen. It was visited also by the elite of the court and by ladies and gentlemen of fashion. Samuel Pepys, for instance, found much recreation there. He reports seeing "my lady Castlemaine at a puppet play, and the street full of people expecting her coming out." On another occasion he visited "Jacob Hall's dancing of the tight rope—a thing worth seeing and mightily followed."

The Beggars' Opera, incidentally, was performed at Bartholomew Fair in 1728. Old tunes provided with new lyrics, a device used by Gay, was one of the stunts employed by the Italian Comedians to circumvent the restrictions

imposed upon them through the agency of the French Established Court Theatre. At the height of their success they had been great favourites in France and had even performed at a royal baptism, but an unfortunate reference to Mme. de Maintenon resulted in their banishment from the court. Some of them, however, joined forces with the French buffoons and jugglers who frequented the fairs and booths. Together they set up Fair Theatres that were so popular that the established theatre, alarmed at their success, took drastic steps to prevent them from performing plays. Many were the dodges resorted to by the comedians to overcome this tyranny: stringing together short scenes from different plays, medleys of gibberish and mime and so on.

One of the reasons why Harlequin, that favourite figure of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, is so universally known and loved is that he is closely associated with the rise of Pantomime in this country.

"The first entertainment that appeared on the English stage where the representation and story were carried on by dancing, action and motion only, was performed in grotesque characters, after the manner of the modern Italians, such as Harlequin, and was called "The Tavern Bilkers" composed by Mr. Weaver and first performed at Drury Lane Theatre in 1702."

Pantomime as originally presented was performed entirely in dumb show, and the Harlequinade, now almost extinct, is all that is left of this original feature.

Our own most vital contribution to pantomime clown was the character of Jester who evolved into Clown: important because it was in the role of Clown that Joe Grimaldi so endeared himself to all that John Kemble declared him to be the "finest pantomimist and low comedian in the world."

Grimaldi's round, full-moon face with lips capable of expressing every shade of physical disgust and enjoyment is the first thing that strikes one: more expressive than the familiar red triangles painted on his face, the striped trousers and pointed blue wig. This supreme clown delighted in disguises, tricks and fantastic constructions of all sorts. He originally sang his most famous song, "Hot Codlins," disguised as a talking bird, and from a clothes basket, two broom handles, a cheese, rolling-pin and an umbrella, he once constructed a magnificent carriage.

For his benefit performance in 1828 Thomas Hood wrote him a most moving farewell speech in which he said:—

"It is four years since I jumped my last jump, filched my last oyster, boiled my last sausage, and set in for retirement. Not quite so well provided for, I must acknowledge, as in the days of my clownship. For then I dare say some of you remember, I used to have a fowl in one pocket and sauce for it in the other."

With the retirement of Grimaldi there was no one to take his place. The Clown of Pantomime was gradually superseded by the Music Hall Comedian who first appeared at harmonic meetings : sing-songs in taverns, saloon theatres and pleasure gardens, such as the Eagle Tavern.

"Up and down the city road
In and out the Eagle ;
That's the way the money goes.
Pop goes the weasel."

The opening of the New Canterbury Hall in 1851 was not only the turning point in the career of its founder, Charles Morton, but marked the beginning of the great era of Victorian Music Hall. How unexpected to find this theatre, with its large picture gallery, situated south of Westminster Bridge, approached through a dreary railway arch and by way of dirty, dingy and narrow streets. The outstanding star of the Canterbury was George Leybourne, the first "Lion Comique" and creator of "Champagne Charlie." He specialised in "Swell" acts and swaggered onto the stage, wearing a long Newmarket coat hiding an immaculate evening dress suit and in his hands a pair of white spotless gloves.

In a period remarkable for its abundance of star personalities it would be invidious to select particular individuals. Yet one name does stand out—Dan Leno, whose human mixture of laughter and tears found a parallel in the great French clown, "Grock," and more recently in the artistry of Charlie Chaplin.

Much has been written about the plush, guilt and gas-brackets of the Victorian Music Hall, the rap-rap of the Chairman, the Stage-Door Johnny, and the saucy Barmaids, pouring out stout and porter and bandying bawdy compliments without turning a hair. Perhaps the fairest comment on all this is contained in the famous summing-up, "It is not an ugly scene; for all that it holds the worst, it also contains the best in human nature."

Gone today, from Central London at any rate, are the great Music Halls of yesterday—the Empire, the Oxford and the Alhambra. Variety has been relegated to a subordinate position in the field of popular entertainment. The more's the pity. For popular entertainment that depends on the personality of the individual, can, by its humanity, understanding, devotion and discipline, be a source of infinite delight to thousands of harrassed and troubled people in all walks of life.

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

THE FESTIVALS

THIS year the two British Drama League Festivals—the one for Full Length and the other for One-Act Plays—have had to face all kinds of difficulties, mainly owing to lack of petrol which has affected not only the actors, but also the organisers and audiences. Nevertheless the number of entries (288 in all) compares favourably with last year, and the interest aroused has been greater than ever. The Full Length Final, adjudicated by Miss Athene Seyler, was held at Harrogate during the week ending May 8th, and as we go to press we learn that the Whitworth Cup was awarded to the Bristol W.E.A. Players for their presentation of *Our Town*, by Thornton Wilder. The runners-up were the Dronfield Players in *Wishing Well* (Eynon Evans). Tied for third place were the Lancaster Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society in *Uncle Harry* (Thomas Job) with the Hygram Players in *The School for Scandal*. The other finalists were the Landore Players in *The Wind of Heaven* (Emlyn Williams) and the Oxford Civil Service Dramatic Society in Pinero's *The Amazons*. On the final day, the Mayor of Harrogate gave a reception for the Landore Players who were performing on that evening, and also took the chair at the presentation of the cup by Mr. Nicholas Hannen. An impression of the Festival will be found on page 42.

The Final of the One-Act Play Festival is fixed for Monday, May 31st at 6.15 p.m. at the Scala Theatre. The adjudicators will be Miss Patricia Burke, Mr. W. A. Darlington, and

Mr. Michael MacOwan. It is pleasant to note that a large increase has been effected this year in the number of entries. The total has reached close on 500. The date of the Final has been specially chosen to synchronise with the end of the League's Annual Conference at Brighton. Those attending the Conference will be able to travel easily from Brighton on the Monday morning so as to be present at the Scala in the evening.

As we foresaw, the agitation which resulted from the case at Southampton where the Authorities threatened to close down halls in that city used by amateurs in view of the fact that they were not duly licensed for stage performances, has abated. Some people feared that a precedent had been set for a wholesale victimisation of the amateur movement throughout the country. However, we have not been made aware of any comparable troubles in other places, and bearing in mind that the Southampton incident arose from rather special circumstances, we are advising enquirers not to be unduly anxious. Nevertheless, what has happened at Southampton may serve a useful purpose if it brings to the notice of the amateur societies and proprietors of the halls in which they are accustomed to produce their plays, that in law they are bound to make sure that such premises are in fact duly licensed for public performances. The responsibility for this lies with the proprietor of the hall, but both he and the tenant are liable to fine if the law in this respect is broken. It must be remembered that regulations are made for the safety of the public. There is nothing wrong with the Act of 1843, which establishes a principle. Its application is a different matter and we trust that Local Authorities in laying down rules will do so in a responsible spirit.

We are glad to announce that Mr. Benn Levy, M.P., has accepted the Council's invitation to act as a co-opted member on that body.

The new Director, Mr. Martin Browne, will assume the editorship of "Drama" with the Autumn number.

Presentation to the retiring Director.

From left to right: Mr. Whitworth, Lord Escher, Mr. George Tomlinson, M.P.

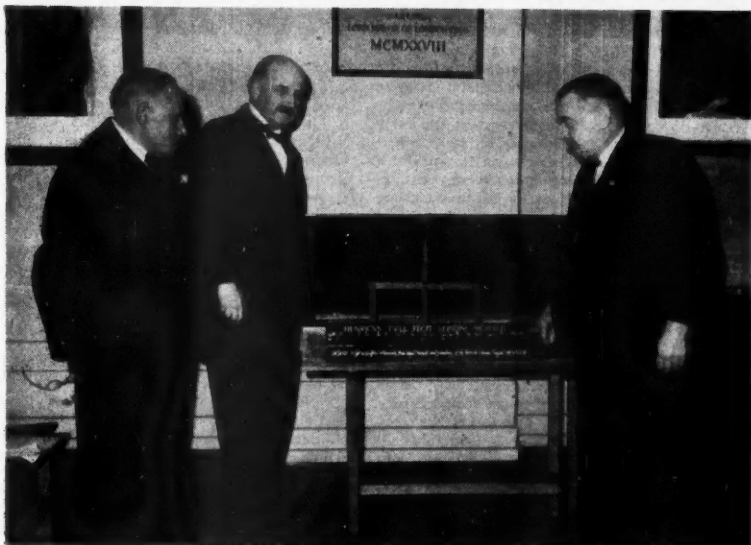


Photo: "The Times"

ON Wednesday afternoon, April 7th, many subscribers to the parting gift to Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth on his retirement as Director of the British Drama League were gathered together at the hall of the British Academy in London, for a formal presentation.

Viscount Escher, who presided, reviewed some of the major incidents in the history of the League, saying that Mr. Whitworth had planted an acorn which had become a giant tree under the shade of which he could now recline during his well-earned leisure. The League was now in a flourishing state with some 8,000 members and affiliated societies, and with much of the credit—among other things—for jogging the Government into the recent promise to finance a National Theatre. Letters containing tributes to Mr. Whitworth had been received from Australia, South Africa and other parts of the Empire. Lord Escher also spoke of the great help given to Mr. Whitworth and to the League by Mrs. Whitworth.

Mr. Tomlinson, Minister of Education, then spoke, congratulating the retiring Director on a great achievement of voluntary effort, saying that the League was a fine example of private enterprise stimulating the Government to a degree of support for policies which might never have been promoted on its own initiative. If this meeting had been to unveil a memorial plaque to Mr. Whitworth he would never have come. In his view the time for such tributes was during the lifetime of the man it was desired to honour, not after his death when they could do him no good.

Miss Lena Ashwell in a moving speech spoke of the way in which, at precisely the right moment, Mr. Whitworth had brought together many movements for the good of the theatre, which would otherwise have languished in isolation. She also referred to the modesty and self-effacement, unusual in leaders of national movements, which he had always shown throughout his career. "This man has done the State great service," she concluded. "And at last they know it."

Lord Escher then presented, on behalf of the subscribers a substantial cheque and a modern clavichord, made by Mr. Henry Tull.

In accepting the gift, Mr. Whitworth said that if he had been modest once, after listening to what had been said that afternoon he could be modest no more. He recalled the play-reading which he had attended at Crayford in 1918, an experience which had given him the germ of the idea of a League which might spread a love of the Theatre and a high standard of dramatic art throughout the country. He also recalled the early days of the League when its so-called "central office," had been a centre without a circumference, if such a thing were possible. But the circumference had gradually come into being and enlarged itself year after year. Though he could still keep in touch

with the League as Chairman of its Council, he would find much solace in his retirement by playing his clavichord, with many memories of the kindness of those who had helped him so wonderfully throughout the period of the League's existence, and whom he would always regard as friends.

The proceedings concluded with a performance on the clavichord by Mr. John Lade.

Those also present included Mrs. Geoffrey Whitworth, Sir Kenneth Barnes, Sir Lewis Casson, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Messrs. Bronson Albery, Clifford Bax, Alec L. Rea, Dr. Boas, Sir Frederick Minter, Professor E. J. Dent, Professor Searls, Mr. and Mrs. E. Martin Browne and Miss Frances Briggs.

IN ULSTER NOW

THERE is a certain difficulty in assessing the progress of the Amateur Movement in Ulster during the last few months. The excitement of the war years has subsided and there is an air of lassitude abroad, which shows itself in easy contentment with existing standards. Very little attention is paid to Irish plays (Mr. C. B. Purdon remarked at the Ballymoney Festival that the term Dialect Plays is a misnomer) and the entries in that class are getting less and less every year. There is also a tendency for Clubs to repeat their previous successes instead of trying new plays, new actors, new methods. Admittedly to do experimental work does not pay at Festivals, there are so many things that can go wrong, the Adjudicator might have whimsies against "that sort of play" and worst of all, the producer might be unsure of himself and more or less groping for a new technique. How much better for a Society to get into a nice, deep, comfortable groove! The cast, the producer and the audience know exactly where they are, all the tricks have been tried, all the effects worked out and they can go on repeating themselves *ad infinitum*.

The Irish Plays are usually presented by the Church Societies and the Young Farmers' Clubs, and the interest in Drama by the Rural societies is one of the heartening aspects of the times. Therefore the arrival of a new play by George Shiels is a great event. More than any other Irish playwright, north or south of the border, George Shiels speaks the language and thinks the thought of the country people, his is a voice which enters every Church and echoes round every kitchen in the land. His new

play *Borderwine*, deals with the illegal traffic of tea and whiskey across the Border. Like all his comedies, it is full of racy dialogues and accurate characterisations, but there is a sudden change in this play to near-tragedy, which usually finds the rural players out of their depth. Such performances as I have seen have stressed the comedy side too much, with the result that the last act appears to be out of key with the remainder. Admittedly the temptation is very great, for Shiels has never drawn a better sketch of an old rascal than Uncle Oiney. He is a cunning, plausible old villain, who twists and turns like a fox. The play as a whole is a stern condemnation of the degrading effects of the Black Market on the naturally good-living, kindly folk of the Border, and when it has been considered and produced from that angle, it will be seen to have gained immensely in stature.

The Group Theatre carries on its policy of giving the young Ulster dramatist a chance of seeing his work on the stage. Early this year they put on *The House that Jack Built*, by Cecil Cree, dealing with the housing situation, a theme which is very much alive to-day. It was unfortunate that public support did not justify a longer run. Another interesting venture was the performance by the Guild Theatre of *The First Legion*, a drama of the Society of Jesus by Emmet Lavery. Here again was a play which broke away from conventional themes. Its production by P. T. O'Hare was a tribute both to his courage and his enthusiasm, and it is to be hoped that his example will be followed by those producers who are anxious to avoid the beaten track.

The Festival Season in Northern Ireland ends at Bangor with what promises to be a bumper crop of entries. They have secured Mr. Robert Young, a newcomer amongst us, as adjudicator, and already the drama enthusiasts who foregather at a popular Belfast milkbar are discussing his *obiter dicta*. Other festivals were held at Dungannon, Portadown and Lisburn, but my own interest was in the one at Ballymoney, where with Mr. Purdom as adjudicator, there was a "bloodmatch" between Coleraine, Portrush and Ballymoney. The standard of acting in that corner of Ulster is high and the back-room boys are keen so the marks were sure to be close. Ballymoney finally won with *The Long Mirror*, and now all is peace in the North West.

A competition which aroused great interest in Belfast was the Inter-Varsity Festival held at Queens University. The great Hall was packed every night half-an-hour before the plays began and there was a good sporting finish between the College of Surgeons, Dublin (*Night Must Fall*) and Trinity College Dublin (*The Master Builder*). Pity the poor adjudicator who had to decide between the relative merits of two good teams doing such widely differing plays. Eventually the Cup went to Trinity, mainly on the playing of Mrs. Solness and young Ragnor Brovik.

A. S. G. LOXTON

RELIGIOUS DRAMA SCHOOLS

The Religious Drama Society is holding two Schools during the summer. The first is at Bishop Otter College, Chichester, for a week from Friday, July 23rd, and is designed for about 100 residential students. The staff includes Pamela Keily, whose work in Sheffield has become famous, Guy Vaesen of the Birmingham Rep., Susan Pearson of the Institute of Mime and Christopher le Fleming the composer, who will deal with the use of music in plays.

The second school is for thirty residents. It is a Festival School for advanced students at the Gateway, Edinburgh, in connection with the visit of the League's Director, E. Martin Browne, and his Pilgrim Players to that theatre. Students will get the chance of attending the last nine days of the Edinburgh International Festival, as the dates are September 4th to 13th. Applications should be made to the Religious Drama Society, S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, W.C.2.

PUBLIC ADJUDICATIONS ?

I have lately been adjudicating the preliminary round of a full-length play festival in which the adjudicator visits performances arranged by the entering companies in the halls or theatres in which they normally play. The festival in question was not a B.D.L. one, but this method of selecting companies for the finals is, I believe, the same as that used in the B.D.L. Full-Length Play Festival.

In this case I feel strongly that a *public* adjudication is unnecessary, and in some cases positively harmful. A private adjudication to the company, after the play is over, is always, I am sure, extremely valuable and, provided that the adjudicator knows his job, the company will learn a great deal from it. They will learn no more from a public adjudication which merely summarises for the audience the points with which the adjudicator deals in detail in his private meeting with the company.

I know that the public adjudication is supposed to help to educate the audience in the proper appreciation of the theatre, and I believe it does so when a number of plays can be compared. When, however, the adjudication takes place at one of several performances which a society puts on in the ordinary way, and the feeling of festival is absent, public criticism simply exposes the deficiencies, to its own audience, of a company that is probably doing good work and may be having an uphill fight in competition with the cinema. The adjudication may well cause some of the club's supporters to feel that the performance they have seen is not so good after all, and so cool their enthusiasm.

It is also quite possible that in many cases country societies number amongst their audience people who have never seen a stage play before. These are not likely to benefit from the adjudication, but they will certainly leave the theatre feeling that the entertainment they have seen was not first class and they know that when they visit the cinema they see exactly the same performance as the audience saw in the West End. In this way the festival may have a positively harmful effect.

It seems to me that it would be a simple matter to leave it to the society to decide whether it wished a public adjudication or not, in the preliminary round. If this were done, the least experienced society could enter for the festival knowing that it could have all the benefits of festival adjudication without the danger of damage to its prestige and a possible falling off in receipts.

HAL D. STEWART

THEATRE BOOKSHELF

"*Understanding Drama*," by Cleanth Brooks and Robert B. Heilman. Harrap. 12s. 6d.

THIS book is clearly the fruit of long teaching experience. The signs will be clear to all teachers of drama and to all thoughtful students: the appropriateness of the instances chosen for illustration can only be the result of long sifting and testing in class-room discussion; the generalisations are practical and firmly substantiated; the questions added to certain sections are such as to lead students to thoughtful analysis of what they have read. It is the kind of book which in this country is likely to be used rather by those who wish to train themselves than by those who are already engaged in teaching others, if only because the teaching of dramatic theory is less widespread here, less systematised and usually incidental to a more general study of the art. But teachers, even those of experience, will come upon valuable hints in its commentary and will often find in its specimen passages and plays a useful and wisely chosen anthology.

The first part is concerned with "Problems of the Drama" and describes with plenty of illustration the nature of dramatic dialogue and action, the relation of drama to other literary forms, certain special problems of the form and how they are met. In the course of this, Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* is quoted and analysed, act by act. The second part studies in the same way some "simpler types" of drama, choosing *Everyman*, *The Menaechmi* of Plautus and Zillo's *London Merchant*. The third part tackles maturer and more complex works of dramatic art, applying the theory and conclusions already evolved to *The School for Scandal*, *Rosmersholm*, *Henry IV* (Part 1) and *The Way of the World*.

The glossary (pp. 483-505) gives definitions or explanations, sometimes running to short essays with illustrations, of certain terms in common use in dramatic criticism.

In short, this is a book which a drama study circle, whose members were familiar with the theatre and some dramatic literature, would find interesting and stimulating as a text book and starting point for discussion.

UNA ELLIS-FERMOR

"*Those Were the Nights*." An anthology of criticism selected by James Agate. Hutchinson. 15s.

This anthology is the result of two anonymous gifts to James Agate; the first, four volumes of dramatic criticism from 1885 to 1893, and, later, over a hundred envelopes containing fifteen hundred criticisms from 1887 to 1906. From this rich storehouse Agate selected those he thought most significant. The result is a fascinating volume dealing with the personalities and productions of the London stage from 1880 to 1906. The writing is usually undistinguished, present day criticism would seem to be better, although it is refreshing to discover that so many critics of the past lacked neither taste or common-sense—Clement Scott's outburst on Ibsen and the *Telegraph's* outrageous leader on the same subject excepted. It is in the startling glimpses of the rapidly fading world of Irving, Tree, and Alexander that the book excels, and the nostalgic atmosphere which it creates is helped by some remarkable photographs.

"*The Muses' Darling*," by Charles Norman. Falcon Press. 12s. 6d.

There was undoubtedly much ado about something in Christopher Marlowe's brief, violent life, but what that something was remains a mystery. Charles Norman in *The Muses' Darling* endeavours to unravel as much of the mystery as possible by studying Marlowe's personal world; he gives us details of the brawls, intrigues and amazingly indiscreet gibes at religion which are all that we know of the poet's life and character apart from his work, and also describes his friends and enemies with their troubled, tragic lives. It is an interesting book, marred by repetition, but made attractive by the ingenious imaginative reconstruction of shadowy episodes.

"*British Drama*," by Allardyce Nicoll. Harrap. 12s. 6d.

Professor Allardyce Nicoll's *British Drama* has been revised and is now issued in a fourth edition. It is probably more useful than ever; from the strange rituals with which drama began to the complex developments of the modern theatre, there seems scarcely a detail left unmentioned. Students and lecturers cannot afford to be without this comprehensive survey.

"All the World's a Stage." Edited by Clifford Bax. Muller. 10s. 6d.

It was a happy idea of Clifford Bax to give us a gallery of portraits of his favourite actors and actresses. The fifty-two photographs (many of them chosen by the players themselves) make a brave and fascinating show, which the urbane, yet delightfully personal commentary considerably enhances. Mr. Bax hints at a second volume, and, indeed this experiment could well be repeated.

"Adventure in Repertory," by Aubrey Dyas. Northampton Repertory Players. 9s. 6d.

This detailed history of the Northampton Repertory Theatre is very similar to that of our other important repertories, although few of them have had to work under the pernicious twice-nightly system as Northampton did for so long, and also, apparently, no other repertory has been able to continue without a break for twenty-one years. But it is the same story of triumphs and failures, of mysterious booms and depressions, of some experiments, a few new plays and countless West End comedies. However, no matter how varied the adventures, Mr. Dyas' enthusiasm remains unbounded, and the delightful illustrations suggest that one of the most important features of the Northampton Repertory is the work of its stage designer, Osborne Robinson. He is an artist of whom any theatre might be proud.

"Crime and Punishment." Dramatised by Rodney Ackland. Sampson Low, Marston & Co. 7s. 6d.

Not many long novels have been compressed for the stage with the skill shown by Rodney Ackland in his version of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (24 m., 17 f. and others). Apart from being a reasonable version, it makes a powerful drama in itself, more horrifying than the book because the descriptive form of a novel exercises a softening influence which the stark dramatic form cannot bestow. The action takes place entirely in the lodging-house of Amalia Lippevechzel, and despite the huge cast and the general din and confusion, Mr. Ackland sees to it that his chief characters stand out with tragic intensity.

"The Technique of Stage Lighting," by R. Gillespie Williams. Pitman. 21s.

This book is divided into four parts, and deals with all aspects of stage lighting. There is much to interest the scientist and electrical engineer in Parts I and II—"Scientific Basis," and "The Adaptation and Control of Light," while producers and designers will welcome Parts III and IV—"The Art of Stage Lighting," and "Practical Lighting for Stage Productions."

F. SLADEN SMITH

ONE-ACT PLAYS PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL FRENCH
PRICE 18. 6d.

"Home Ain't So Sweet," by Joe Corrie. 3 m. 3 f.

In the complicated atmosphere of a film studio Joe Griffins, a film maker, tries to solve a film star's matrimonial troubles, and to make a film. He does neither. This is an amusing comedy with plenty of life in it.

"When The Old Cock Crows," by Joe Corrie. 2 m. 3 f.

George Hazelwood, a boastful old man of sixty, accepts a bribe from his nephew. He has to propose to Eliza Bridwell, a miserable old harridan, and make her agree to marry him. George goes ahead with the joke. He carries out his part so well, that she does agree to marry him. The climax comes when George is held to his word.

"A Storm On Parnassus," by Joe Corrie. 2 m., 4 f.

Robert Southey is trying to get his article finished for the "Quarterly." He is writing amidst the chatter of Edith, his wife, Sarah Coleridge and Mary Lovell. Into this scene bursts Shelley and his young wife, Harriet. Shelley rebukes Southey for writing for the "Quarterly," and thereby renouncing all that he had stood for in his younger days. Shelley is only quieted by the mention of supper.

"Murder at the Play," by Joe Corrie. 7 m., 2 f.
A novel mystery play with a good final twist.

"Interlude," by Paul Vincent Carroll. 3 m., 1 f.

Farrelly, beaten in love, takes his revenge upon the world by driving the poor to even worse poverty by his demands on them. He is a rich man and holds their lives in his hands. He chooses not to let them live.

"The Conspirators," by Paul Vincent Carroll. 7 m., 1 f.

In the entrance hall of the Dublin City Library stand the busts of many of the men who helped to make Ireland's history. These busts chatter among themselves and to Mrs. Galgoogley, the cleaner. When her son is killed in an uprising, they welcome him—as one who has also played a part in the history of Ireland. This is an interesting play and has plenty of humour.

"The Gentle Shade," by Mabel Constanduros and Howard Agg. 4 m., 3 f.

Exactly six years ago Christopher Henderen walked out of the house. He has never been seen again; and he is believed to have been drowned. To-day he appears to his mother and to his wife. But only to show them that it is better that he should be dead.

"*A Snake on Sunday*," by Mabel Constanduros
and Howard Agg. 2m., 4f.

A domestic comedy with most of the usual misunderstandings and a few additional ones.

"*Elizabeth Wears a Wig*," by Percy Baneshik.
9 m., 1 f.

Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Burbage appear in this comedy. Shakespeare amuses himself at the expense of the Queen and her wig.

"*Behind My Skull*," by W. Dinner and W. Morum. 3 m., 2 f.

An unpleasant story of a boy blind since birth and hideously ugly, whose mother seeks to save him from further pain by refusing to let a doctor try and cure his blindness, because she doesn't want the boy to know of his own ugliness.

"*The Last Word*," by Stuart Ready. 6 f.

The girls in the star-grade of a reform home arrange and carry out the murder of their new Governor.

"*Mr. Tramlow is Not Himself*," by Philip Johnson. 2 m., 3 f.

This play deals with the change of character between a man of high principle and an idle drunkard. The whole affair is most distracting for the wives.

"*An Immortelle*," by Philip Johnson. 2 m., 2 f., 1 voice.

A horrifying story of a murderer being haunted by his victim—who was his wife. This play has little about it that can be recommended.

"*Only The Brave*," by Philip Johnson.
3 m., 3 f.

A sentimental play about a doctor who chooses to look after the poor rather than tend the rich. Thereby forcing himself and his wife to live in poverty.

"*Wise Folly*," by J. F. Wright. 7 m.

Sir Richard Hilden is torn between loyalty to King James and protecting his nephew—who is fleeing from the King's men. By a complicated method he saves his nephew.

"*Enter Comedy*," by Norman Holland.
7 m., 4 f.

A long winded play on how the Greeks first took to comedy—as written by Sophocles.

"*Ladies Depart*," by Evan John. 5 f.

Two nuns driven out of their property—a century or so earlier—haunt the house in a quiet sort of way.

ONE-ACT PLAYS FOR JUVENILE PERFORMERS
PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL FRENCH, PRICE 1S. 6d.

"*A Prince He Would A-Wooing Go*," by
Joe Corrie. 2 m., 5 f.

An amusing modern version of the Cinderella story.

"*An Improbable Episode*," by L. du Garde
Peach. 6 m.

Despite the fact that most of the characters are over fifty, this play is, nevertheless, suitable—both in theme and dialogue—for youth groups. It is the story of King Alfred and the burnt cakes. It goes on to show Alfred being saved from the Danes by a British peasant.

"*The Queen's Ring*," by L. du Garde Peach. 6 f.

Catherine, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth, intercepts a ring from Essex to Elizabeth. This ring—if it had reached the Queen in time—would have saved Essex.

"*Music for the Emperor*," by Ronald
Hadlington. 11 m.

The introduction of an Emperor to the novelty of music.

"*All the Tea in China*," by Wilfred Harvey.
2 m., 4 f.

The story of a kind old Chinese lady and her three selfish daughters.

"*The Princess with a Load on Her Mind*,"
by Wilfred Harvey.

The story of a silly princess and her even sillier parents.

"*Sleeping Beauty*," by Irene Husler.

The story of Sleeping Beauty told in mime.

THREE RELIGIOUS PLAYS PUBLISHED BY
SAMUEL FRENCH. PRICE 1S. 6d.

"*The Summoning of Everyman*." A modern
version of the mediæval morality play by Herbert
W. Payne.

Everyman summoned to God's presence suddenly discovers that all that he had prized most in life, i.e., worldly goods, are now no use to him.

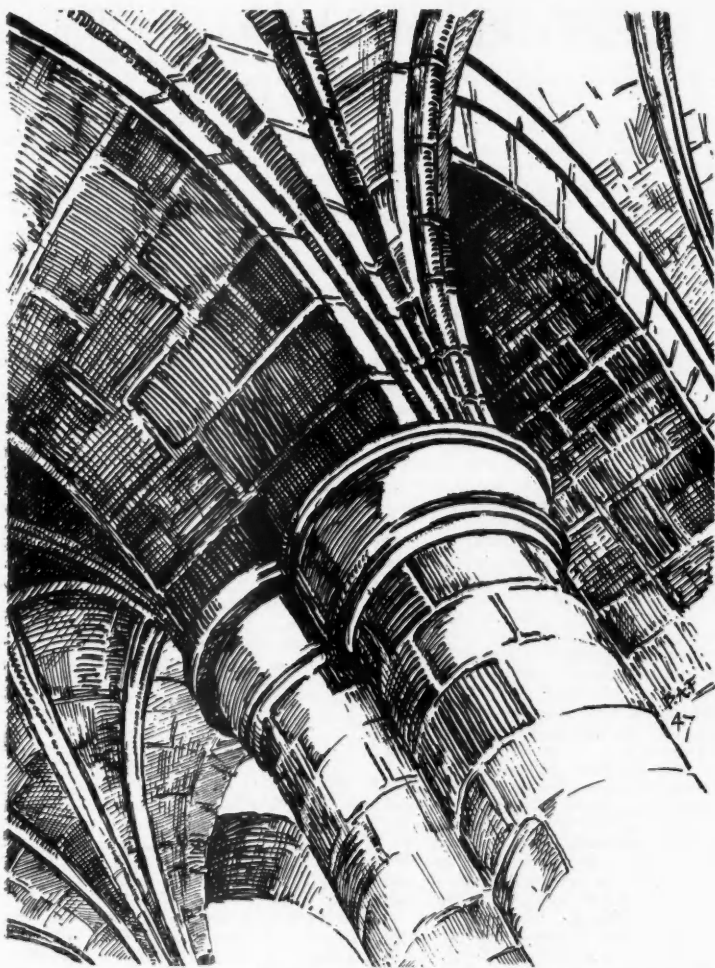
"*The Victory of the Cross*," by M. Creagh-
Henry. 3 m., 4 f.

This play tells the events between Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday in a direct, simple fashion.

"*What's in a Name?*" by Ursula Bloom.
4 m., 1 f.

A short play on the birth of Judas—and the choosing of his name.

DOREEN DE LA COUR



PRIZE COMPETITION

THIS is the programme cover designed by R. Atkinson, Esq., for the City of Oxford School Dramatic Society's production of *The Zeal of Thy House*. The Editor offers a prize of Two Guineas for the best printed programme cover

used in a production made during 1947 or 1948 by any Society affiliated to the League, submitted not later than July 1st. Only printed designs are eligible. He reserves the right to reproduce the winning design in DRAMA.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE'S BROADSIDE

Dear Sir,

I am not strictly a Priestley fan, but even if his zeal were not all according to wise knowledge, I would like to suggest that his *Theatre Outlook* is immeasurably better than the still prevalent *laissez faire*. Coming from such an eminent writer as Mr. St. John Ervine, many of this critic's attacks savour of professional rivalry. Has he not almost forgotten that few things disprove a case more than the mistake of overproving it?

And are not all playwrights (including Mr. St. John Ervine) trying to save the world in some way or another? And does Mr. Priestley really think he is the "first person to have thought of reform"—the watchword of which must always be a terror and torment to those too satisfied with their ruts? And does J.B.P. really suggest that young writers should be coddled on to the stage?

Mr. Shaw has also been trying to save England, John Bull's Other Island, the world and the theatre for quite a while and he is even cleverer at it (sometimes) than the gentlemen mentioned. In 1935, while on the high seas, he wrote: "When I write (a play) with the additional attraction of providing the twentieth century with an up-to-date religion or the like, that luxury is thrown in gratuitously; and the play, simply as a play, is not necessarily either the better or the worse for it."

Shakespeare often preached without knowing it. One of his greatest sermon-texts is in Hamlet's mouth: "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so . . ." and I can't help thinking that such a helpful thought might well reconcile two great dramatists to one another. They should take heart that none of them as far as I can see are in danger of offending the Testament prediction: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

I believe that if we estimated people by their motives instead of the expressions of them there would be far less discord and intolerance everywhere.

Yours faithfully,

Gerald Stanwell.

49 The Avenue,
Beckenham, Kent.

Dear Sir,

May I correct one point in Mr. St. John Ervine's interesting article in your Spring issue? He says: "It was 'commercial'

managers who performed Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes." This is not so.

Athenian drama was produced at the expense of the wealthiest citizens, who were compelled by law to undertake certain *leitourgiai* ('Liturgies' or public services) including the mounting of the annual dramatic competitions. There was no question of a long run in which expenses were recovered: the performances were part of the religious Festival of Dionysus in spring, and were seldom repeated, as the whole City State was expected to attend the first performance. Admission, in early times, was free. In the fifth century B.C., the rush for seats was so great that to avoid confusion (the theatre at Athens could hold 30,000) a small charge was made, for which a seat could be booked (2 obols for the whole day, i.e., about one shilling and fourpence); but at the end of the century any citizen who claimed it was given this sum out of a special State fund. The sum received from those who paid for their tickets was devoted to keeping the enormous open-air building in repair. There was no profit for anyone concerned in the production, except that the winning playwright received a sum of money from the State funds.

Such were the conditions in which Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, as well as many of their almost equally gifted contemporaries, wrote and had their plays performed. There was, of course, no rival theatre at Athens.

Yours faithfully,

Kathleen Freeman.

Lark's Rise,
St. Mellons (Mon.).

GLASGOW UNITY THEATRE

This correspondence cannot be continued so its initiator, Mr. Andrew Campbell, should have a final word. He replies to Mr. David Keir by referring to the company's recent showing in London and the "almost universal commendation of their acting and of their general artistic ability. Is it not better," he adds, "that a company should live by performing plays that are popular with the ordinary public, and by so doing build audiences in the various centres visited and maintain its financial position so as to present fairly frequent performances of the plays of greater dramatic value?"—Ed.

ENTERTAINMENTS TAX

Dear Sir,

I am writing regarding refund of entertainments tax on two performances which we recently gave for charity. Our expenses did exceed the 50 per cent. allowed (takings £38 14s.; expenses £21 4s.; handed to charity £17 10s.) and we have now received a form from H.M. Customs and Excise saying we have forfeited our deposit of £7, and asking for a further cheque for £1 11s. 7d. making a loss to us of £8 11s. 7d.

Under the present difficult conditions we feel most strongly that there should be some change made in the rules. The Customs and Excise should realise that production costs have increased enormously and it is practically impossible these days not to exceed the 50 per cent. limit. Owing to the cut in petrol and to the fact that in any case we have to perform in a district where weather conditions affect the size of the audience, the sale of tickets is somewhat precarious. As it now stands it is a definite discouragement to Amateur Dramatic Societies, especially when asked to do shows for charitable organisations.

Yours sincerely,

Beatrice Minton.

Brockham Players,
Betchworth, Surrey.

FORTY-EIGHT THEATRE

This theatre, directed by Velona Pilcher, Elizabeth Sprigge and David Tutaeu, was founded a short time ago by a group of writers and artists who decided to start an active theatre on the lines of the old Gate Theatre in Villiers Street, (it will be remembered that Miss Pilcher was one of the founders of the original Gate Theatre), and premises were acquired at 30 Abbey Gardens, St. John's Wood. The Anglo French Art Centre have now invited the Forty-eight Theatre to add the art of the theatre to the Centre's other activities and have offered the use of the Centre on Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. Theatre lectures, readings and discussions will take place every Tuesday evening, and a distinguished list of speakers has already been engaged. In May *Yes is for Yes for a Very Young Man* (Gertrude Stein) was produced at the Art Centre, to be followed in June by *The Unknown Woman of Arras* (Armand Salacrou). Neither of these plays has previously been performed in this country. The cost of full membership is £2 2s. a year; theatre membership 5s. 6d.

PLAYS

Now available for
Amateur Societies:

ANOTHER LOVE STORY. Frederick Lonsdale's sparkling comedy hit. 6 m., 5 f., 2 sets.
FRIEDA. Ronald Millar's big stage and film success. 4 f., 5 m., 1 set

TO DREAM AGAIN. by Veronica Haigh. "A remarkable play."—*Oxford Times*.

THE HASTY HEART. A brilliant comedy drama and a big West End success. 1 f., 8 m., 1 set.
PINK STRING AND SEALING WAX. Roland Pertwee's big West End success.

LADIES IN RETIREMENT. "... one of the best thrillers I ever saw."—*Daily Express*.

DR. BRENT'S HOUSEHOLD. A powerful domestic drama. 3 m., 5 f., 1 set.
GREAT DAY. A witty and warm-hearted comedy about the Women's Institutes.

DARK VICTORY. Bette Davis appeared in the film version of this moving drama. 7 m., 7 f., 2 sets
WASN'T IT ODD? An unusual comedy by Kenneth Horne.

STAFF DANCE. Robert Morley's sparkling and witty comedy.

WATCH ON THE RHINE. "Outstanding play of the year."—*Daily Mail*. 6 m., 5 f., 1 set
THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER. The brilliant West-End and Broadway comedy hit.

BOY MEETS GIRL. A brilliantly witty comedy about Hollywood.

TO KILL A CAT. "A brilliant comedy drama."—*Sketch*.

GOODNESS, HOW SAD! "One long laugh."—*Sunday Pictorial*. 3 m., 4 f., 1 set
YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU. The famous comedy classic.

GIVE ME YESTERDAY. "Give me a play like this any day."—*Sphere*.

THE LITTLE FOXES. "An excitingly interesting play."—*Sunday Dispatch*. 6 m., 4 f., 1 set.

STAGE DOOR. "Extremely diverting comedy."—*James Agate*. 11 m., 21 f., 2 sets.

HOUSE PARTY. A charming domestic comedy.

MONEY BY WIRE. A really funny farce.

ONE ACT PLAYS:

Two new releases:
Rough Justice. 8 f.
Trousseau for Phyllis. 1 m., 7 f.

White Blackmail. 7 f.
Widow of Hearingdang. 7 f.
Strange Refuge. 9 f.
Bitter Fruit. 7 f.
Falling Upstairs. 1 m., 3 f.
Lake of Darkness. 2 m., 2 f.
Bridge of Sighs. 4 m., 2 f.
Expert Evidence. 3 m., 2 f.
Test Me. 2 m., 1 f.
Family Pride. 6 f.
Beyond. 3 m., 1 f.

LET'S GIVE A SHOW!

A booklet of articles on every aspect of stage production and acting. Price 4/- Post Free.

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English Theatre Guild Ltd.
75, BERWICK STREET, LONDON, W.1.
PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS

AMATEUR SURVEY

WALES IN LONDON

In presenting plays with a Welsh background *The North London Welsh Theatre Guild*, founded a year ago, are attempting something obviously well within their scope. In January last they gave "The Wishing Well" (Eynon Evans) and the simple, warm humanity of the play made a great appeal to the crowded audiences. Some of the Guild's members possess real talent, and particular mention should be made of Leslie Evans and Glyn Hughes, who gave lively and humorous performances as the landlord of "The Wishing Well" and the postman, respectively, and Winifred Hall-Jones who produced the play. The number of plays with a Welsh setting is, of course, limited, but as one-third of the Guild's membership is English, it is hoped to include at least one English play each year. The Guild hope to present plays not generally attempted by amateurs, and their constant aim will be to improve the level of their work.

FESTIVALS

The *Scottish Community Drama Association's* Festival this season had a record entry of 432 teams, and preliminary rounds took place in forty-one different places in Scotland. This enormous activity was carried on in spite of the difficulties under which the country labours, the petrol ban being not the least of these. Indeed, the Association think the ban is likely to choke, and in many cases kill, this form of amateur dramatic activity. In scattered areas, especially the Highlands, members of clubs often walked miles to attend rehearsals which could only be held because the producer was able to come by car. Where this is not possible clubs are discouraged; often this happens in just those districts which most require such stimulus to enliven country life and prevent the menace of further depopulation. No fewer than nineteen original plays were entered for the Festival, one being in Gaelic. The finals were held early in April, the Adjudicator being Mr. André van Gysegghem. This was the apparent end of the Scottish dramatic activities for the season, but the work of the S.C.D.A. goes on, behind the scenes all the year round.

In the Festival organised by the Borough of Camberwell Youth Committee, in which all the participants (except producers) were under the age of 21, *St. Barnabas Fellowship* were awarded first place with "The Lovely Miracle" (Johnson). The Committee hopes

to organise a Shakespeare Festival in the autumn, details from Mrs. R. Conway, 83 Peckham Road, London, S.E.15.

SUSSEX PLAYWRIGHTS

The Annual General Meeting of the *Sussex Playwrights Club* took place in February, and reports show that the Club constantly extends the range of its influence. Mr. Charles Walker hoped that other County Playwrights' Clubs would be formed (Sussex is at present unique) to which, in time, managements seeking plays would turn, as already happens in their own case. Mr. Hamilton Fyfe was elected a Vice-President; Miss Arlett and Major Bray Wyndham (Director of the Playhouse Theatre, Brighton) were elected Honorary Members. Successes by members during 1947 included the presentation in May by the St. John Ambulance Brigade of "Service of Mankind" (Joan Brampton). Written in collaboration with Robert Speaight, who spoke the commentary, the play was performed before H.R.H. the Duchess of Kent, who congratulated both authors.

TOURING COMPANIES

Formed in April, 1947, *The Egoists* touring dramatic club has already given performances in London, Middlesex, Herts, Bucks and Suffolk. The policy of the company is to perform original plays in an original way, and a unique example of this was the production on the actual haunted site in Suffolk of a play by their President, Richard Shepherd, based on the legend of Borley Rectory. A similar script is shortly to be filmed, the Company taking part. Two other plays by Richard Shepherd have been performed by the Club, one of which recently won the Southern Counties "Walker Cup" for the best original play. Scripts by amateur playwrights are welcomed by the Club's Committee, and performed by the Company if accepted.

Another unusual touring Company, the *Winifred Ackroyd Players*, was formed in 1942 with the long-term view of becoming a repertory company. At first their work was largely of concert-party type, but programmes always included "straight" one-act plays, and the players found that even verse-speaking, presented in an appropriate way, was appreciated in such a district as Bow. One of their early efforts was a morality play in Hoxton. Their aim

was to take drama to people who could not afford West-end prices, and they received ready appreciation from audiences who, in some cases, had never seen a stage play before. For three seasons the players have toured out of London to hospitals (military and civil), gun sites, youth clubs, prisons and other institutions. Their first three-act play, "Goodness How Sad," was produced by Miss Ackroyd in January at Fairbairn House, Plaistow, with admirable lightness and pace, and was thoroughly appreciated by a packed audience.

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

Timbury W.E.A. Dramatic Society has a membership of thirty-six, consisting of housewives, tradesmen, printers, school-teachers and the local doctor. Plays are produced in the Church Room, rehearsals taking place in the houses of members. The Society has its own Library and holds regular playreadings. In April they produced "Jacob's Ladder," to be followed later in the year by "The Wishing Well."

LONDON SOCIETIES—OLD AND NEW

In January last the *Speedwell Players*, founded in 1929, gave, for their thirty-sixth production, three successful performances of "This Happy Breed" (Coward), followed in March by "Frieda" (Millar). A permanent mailing list has been started to advise prospective patrons of forthcoming productions. To open their 1948 season the *Tavistock Repertory Company* chose "The Importance of Being Earnest" (Wilde). The Company as a whole delivered the witticisms with spirit and clearness, with the possible exception of Hugh Barty-King as Algernon Moncrieff, whose speech was at times so quick as to be unintelligible. In their February production, "The Sacred Flame" (Maugham), the unusually artistic setting which was designed by Vivian Milroy and executed entirely with old material, outshone the acting which, for the most part, was undistinguished. In March "Misalliance" (Shaw) was effectively produced by Bernard Box. An outstanding performance was given by Eric Batson as the strange young man. A new dramatic venture is *The Theatre Club* in North London, which scored a great success with its first production in January. They next presented Kenneth Horne's light comedy, "Yes and No," at their own little theatre in Hornsey for a week in February. Since then, "The Constant Wife" and "Ghosts" have been produced, and it is eventually hoped to present weekly repertory. Staffed entirely by amateurs, the Club is unique of its kind. It is run on lines similar to professional theatre clubs, and associate

One-Act Plays Just Out

HAVE YOU SEEN MY LADY ?

Farce Geoffrey Skelton 2 m., 2 f.

HOW PLEASANT TO KNOW MRS. LEAR

Comedy Charles Causley 5 f.

MAN AT THE DOOR

"Suspense" Thriller. 1 m., 3 f.
H. C. G. Stevens

MERLIN LIMITED

Comedy Winifred Trentham 3 m., 2 f.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Comedy Margaret Tims 2 m., 5 f.

MISS HAFFNER

Drama Patricia Chowat 2 m., 6 f.

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membership is open to the public. Activities include a Drama School, Sunday Club, Playwrights' Group and a Revue Section.

The *Ingoldsbys Club* celebrated its 300th production at Cripplegate Theatre with a very bright performance of "Trelawney of the Wells" early in February last. Their programme since 1861 discloses a most interesting series of plays performed, and the complete list, which was printed in the programme, provides a remarkable index of the change of taste which has occurred in the theatre since then. "Still Waters Run Deep," for instance, appeared in their first year, "Box and Cox" in 1882, "Caste" two years later, "Liberty Hall" in 1900, and so on, ending up in 1947 with "Rebecca" and "The Gleam." This Society has remarkably mirrored the passing years, and we hope that on the opening of its 400th production this fine tradition will have been maintained. The *O.U.D.S.* made its first appearance in London at Toynbee Hall towards the end of March in Dekker's "The Shoemakers' Holiday," produced by David Raeburn. A vigorous performance throughout, with original scenery designed by Miss Audrey Dunlop. The theatre was crowded by a distinguished audience.

Other plays visited in London during the last three months included "Holy Isle" (Bride), by the *Royal College of Art Theatre Group*, Kensington. This production was notable for the beautiful and unusual scenery and costumes designed by the students. The *Civil Service Theatre Guild* for its first production gave a most sensitive performance of "Music at Night" (Priestley) at the Tavistock Little Theatre. "Distinguished Gathering" (Parish) was presented by the *Selfridge Players* at the Scala Theatre. Good performances were given by Arthur Fowles and Helen Macdonald, but for the most part the acting was not sufficiently natural and relaxed.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Stoneleigh Residents' Dramatic Club's first production which took place in May, 1946, showed that the Club has its fair share of talent. "Tony Draws a Horse" and "Fresh Fields" followed with such success that it was decided to enter for the B.D.L. Festival in 1947. "Young Mrs. Barrington" was chosen for this, and Mr. Rupert Harvey's adjudication proved of great assistance to the Club in all branches of production. The Club's chief difficulty has been (and still is) finding suitable halls for their plays. They think it is high time Local Authorities woke to the fact that amateur societies play an essential part in the life of the community and should be encouraged in their efforts. *The Langdon*

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Players have also had a busy season, during which they produced three plays. "Blithe Spirit" was highly successful due to some extent to the fact that the member responsible for the effects was a conjurer! "Outward Bound" was entered for the Adult Drama Festival and Mr. Eric Newton, the adjudicator, had much to praise and some constructive criticism to offer. The Players suffered a set-back when their producer left for South Africa at the beginning of the season, but having a few experienced members it was possible to proceed with the pre-arranged programme. Mr. Allan F. Neale, previously associated with the Taverners and the Red Triangle players, has now become the Players' full-time producer.

A NEW LITTLE THEATRE

The *Humber Repertory Company*, Hull, are to build their own Little Theatre, and plans have already been prepared. The building, which will have a seating capacity of 250 and is to be fitted with the latest devices, is to be developed from a large government hut. The cost is estimated to be about £1,000. Guest Repertory Companies will be invited to use the theatre.

OPERA IN DEVON

While opera does not come within the scope of the League, we have been asked to mention that *The Teignmouth Society*, revived in November, 1946, now has about 100 members. In May, 1947, a meeting was called to revive the *Dawlish Operatic Society* with forty-five members, and in September, 1947, the *Teignmouth Light Opera Company* was started with fifty members. Those concerned doubt if the formation of three opera companies in ten months has ever been achieved before. They think there is a great need for such societies to-day, and in spite of the hard work involved find pleasure in helping to provide them. A most successful production of "Robin Hood" was given early in the spring, breaking all local records for attendance and receipts. "No, No, Nanette" was chosen for the next production.

MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

For over twenty-five years this Grammar School has maintained a high reputation for its Shakespearean productions. This year's performance of "As You Like It" was marked chiefly by harmony of production, decor and lighting which created an amalgam of French Renaissance and Warwick woodland. Mr. V. S. Fawcett's work as a scenic artist was of professional standard. A special feature was the singing and music which was either real Elizabethan, or compositions by Mr. C. P. Holyman so

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genuine in feeling as to be almost indistinguishable from the rest. The general level of acting was good, the best individual performance being that of N. C. Stevenson as Celia.

MAGAZINES AND NEWSLETTERS

"The Phoenix" journal of the *Abingdon Drama Club*, reports that the Club's fourth major production "Frieda" was its greatest achievement to date. Those who saw it were much impressed and a definite step has thus been made towards the creation of a regular audience. Members of local youth organisations were admitted to the final dress rehearsal at a small charge, giving the actors the advantage of a preliminary run before an audience, albeit a slightly disconcerting one. Among many lively and interesting features *Sunderland Drama Club's* "Prompt Copy" (January) contains a critical appreciation of Strindberg by Christopher Fry. *Eltham Little Theatre's* "Newsletter" shows that their recent productions have been, in their own words, "Rich and mixed! Shaw and slap-stick; three-acts and one-acts." Their feature "Comment and Controversy" continues to attract lively discussion. The *Highbury Bulletin* reports that *Highbury Little Theatre's* fourth Annual Theatre Conference, usually held in the summer, took place on December 6th. In the afternoon Prof. Allardyce Nicoll spoke on "The Influence of the Playhouse on the Drama," with Mr. T. C. Kemp in the Chair. At the evening session Mr. John English opened a discussion on "The Intimate Theatre." *Merseyside Unity Theatre Bulletin* (March) gives the news that last month the Society welcomed to Liverpool for the first time Manchester Unity Theatre in their production "Awake and Sing." Under the new system of exchanged productions Merseyside will perform "Man of Destiny" and "Mak and the Shepherds," at the Queen's Hall, Manchester, from March 11th to 13th. *Bradford and District Theatre Guild*, now well under way, has already increased the size of its Bulletin. The Bradford Education Committee have promised to co-operate in running classes in production, make-up, lighting and elocution if sufficient numbers can be guaranteed. A register is being made of such societies as are willing to lend properties and costumes to others. The first issue of "The Working Light," Broadsheet of the *Northumberland and Durham Divisions of the British Drama League* was issued in February last. Members interested in news of amateur activity in the North-East (and further afield) should write to Mr. Frank Holloway, Graingerville, Stamfordham, Northumberland.

DORIS HUTTON

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All those drama lovers who have taken an eager interest in the formation of the Old Vic Theatre School, and who hope from it something like a revolution in the training of actors for the English stage, will want to see the first show given by its students. Two programmes are being given between May 27th and June 2nd, and will be the first performances to take place since the War in the Old Vic itself. As the building was badly damaged it has not yet been possible to restore it sufficiently to obtain an L.C.C. Licence, and the School is therefore obliged to gather its audiences through the Vic Wells Association and the Old Vic Club. Anyone wishing to join in order to get seats for these performances should write to the Secretary of the Old Vic, Waterloo Road, S.W.1.

On Thursday, February 26th, the Swinton and Pendlebury Civic Theatre, at the Public Hall, Pendlebury, was officially opened by His Worship the Mayor—Councillor the Rev. E. T. Kerby, M.C., M.A. All the planning and constructional work in connection with the theatre, the lighting and stage equipment, has been carried out by members of the Swinton and Pendlebury Arts Club in consultation with the Borough Surveyor.

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BACKGROUND to PRODUCTION

A LIBERAL education in theatre is provided by the British Drama League Ful-Time course for instructors in amateur drama. The syllabus is remarkably complete. It explores the furthest implications of its subject, yet does not neglect the smallest practical detail. Moreover, it recognizes the central importance of imagination. The students are not only instructed; through theatre visits, discussion, reading, they are immersed in theatre.

This course, the second of its kind organised by the British Drama League, is of 10 weeks' duration, ending on March 20th. There is no other full-time course for those wishing to work for the amateur theatre, and it has a spaciousness which evening classes inevitably lack. Just over half of its thirty students are teachers; all have had some previous dramatic experience. During the course, the work of each individual student as a producer and instructor is assessed by a board of outside examiners.

Almost daily the students practise production, first choosing, then being allotted, scenes. Collaterally, the instructors demonstrate production methods by rehearsing one-act plays with them. Lectures by professional producers supplement this practical work. Thus, a visit to *St. Joan* was followed by discussion with Mr. John Burrell, who explained various points in his production, and showed how, in his view, a play presenting a thesis demanded a certain formalisation of setting. Training in the technique of instruction is given against a wide educational background. Lectures on the different stages of education emphasize that development is a continuous process.

ART IN LIFE

A forum on "The Arts in Education," presided over by Miss D. M. Hammonds, H.M.I., welcomed the increasingly imaginative approach to art education in schools, but considered that the arts should become a more integral part of school life. The teacher's task was to help children, stretch their minds, enlarge their vision and enjoy expression—not to impose a technique. Professor T. S. Searls, speaking on "Drama in Further Education," described how adult "education for living" could be approached through drama, with its almost universally interesting theme of human character and behaviour. Other speakers outlined the requirements of amateur organisations.

Since production and teaching technique

must be rooted in a broad knowledge of dramatic literature and the theatre, the course includes lectures ranging widely over these subjects, and critical discussion of plays. The different aspects of stagecraft are also given a prominent place; and detailed information on obtaining equipment and expert help is supplemented in exchange sessions where students tell each other of discoveries.

One may sketch the scope of this course, but it is difficult to do justice to its influence on those taking part. The B.D.L. instructors, Miss Frances Mackenzie (principal of the course), Mr. Charles Thomas, and Mr. Frank Newman, are to be congratulated on enabling the students, not to acquire a slick formula, not simply to increase technical knowledge and competence, but to see into the life of an art.

(Reprinted by permission from "The Times" Educational Supplement, March 13th, 1948.)

LIBRARY STOCKTAKING

The Library will be closed for cleaning and stocktaking during the month of August. It will be realised that in order to give efficient service during the other eleven months of the year, it is absolutely necessary to clean and check the stock, and the Librarian requests members to spare her all avoidable correspondence during the closed period. No sets can be dispatched. Requests for single copies, necessary for settling autumn productions, will be attended to as speedily as possible, though no undertaking can be given.

RODNEY BENNETT

Very many people will mourn the loss of Rodney Bennett whose books on school drama and on play writing are to be found in every school in the country, while his stories seem to fit every age. As an adjudicator his kindly genial manner and his careful judgement gained respect and affection at once, and when he was working at a school for teachers—not always the easiest material—he was in his true element. He had come to Devon during the war and did much work there for the County Committee for Drama, by whom he will be long remembered and greatly mourned.

MARY KELLY



A scene from "Love's Labour's Lost," presented by the Richmond Shakespeare Society in St. Mary's Hall, Twickenham, November 1947. Producers: Peter Curtis and Jennifer Craig.

NATIONAL FINAL

The Full-Length Play Festival is having growing pains, but it showed itself healthy enough in the varied choice of play, the good team-spirit of the companies and the generally high standard of performance achieved at Harrogate. The Royal Hall is a pleasant theatre to sit in but exacting for players, and is still awaiting a new lighting set ordered 2½ years ago. Most teams overcame these difficulties well, and were compensated for them by the beauty of the town and the kindly welcome of its inhabitants. Harrogate is a centre in which this national event might be worked up to the importance it deserves.

The approach made by Miss Athene Seyler to the task of adjudication won great respect, and raised some questions of importance. Here was a great actress, who has also trained many students for the professional stage, assessing amateur work for the first time. She did not relax the standard of perfection, to which all true practitioners of an art must aspire; and consequently found it hard, in the earlier part of the week, to find suitable words in which to convey to the general public a true impression of what she saw. The final summing-up on Saturday night, gave a balanced and penetrating commentary on the whole Festival; and if teams can take to heart this assessment, by a mind fresh to amateur work and deeply sensitive to theatre-values, they will have a truer knowledge of their worth—all the clearer because it was not blurred by the detail properly dealt with in earlier rounds. The outstanding moments, such as the moving love-scene over the drugstore counter in *Our Town*, got their proper tribute from the adjudicator as well as from the audience. For these things the 1948 Festival will be remembered.

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DUTCH DOUBLE

"*Hit Londense Tooneel in Oorlogstijd*"
(*The London Theatre in War-time*), by Dr.
H. A. Keuls. *Republiek der Letteren Amsterdam*,
1945.

IN this well-written and beautifully illustrated little book Mr. Keuls anticipates Peter Noble's much more ambitious "British Theatre," in the Yearbooks series. It was of course planned to give the Dutch, who were culture-starved under the German occupation, an idea of what this country contributed to the stage, while the rest of Western Europe was entirely cut off. The theatre is examined in all its aspects, the author's personal opinions are given fearlessly and in lively fashion and all the tendencies of the modern stage are thoroughly reviewed. The Arts Theatre Club and the Unity Theatre Club get a chapter to themselves and the many activities of the British Drama League as well as its influence on amateur acting over the whole of Great Britain, are widely discussed. C.E.M.A., now the Arts Council, is of course mentioned. A clear picture is given of the way in which the London Stage has held its own under the most difficult war time conditions.

"*Jan Punt en Marten Corver*," by Ben Albach.
P. N. Van Kampen and Zoon. Amsterdam.
1946.

The subtitle of this book, which deals with the lives and careers of two historical characters of the Dutch Stage, is "The Netherlands theatre in the eighteenth century," and indeed, from the close on 200 pages of this entertaining and well documented volume there emerges a clear picture of theatre life in the principal Dutch towns in that age of good living. The hero of the book is Jan Punt, for a generation the most gifted and admired actor of the famous Amsterdam "Schonburg." Marten Corver was his talented pupil, who became his rival and gradually took his place in public favour. Historically the most important chapters are those which deal with the conventions of acting and the style adopted by the players in their grouping, their gestures and their diction. All through the century from the stately seventeenth to the neo-classicism of the later part of the eighteenth there was the struggle between the heroic and the realistic style, comparable with the French fight for supremacy between the followers of Corneille and those of Voltaire.

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FESTIVAL IN GERMANY

THIS Drama Festival, which took place on February 14th and 15th, 1948, was sponsored by the Welfare Directorate of the Control Commission for Germany. It consisted of two competitions, one for play writing, and one for performance. There were thirty-six entries for the latter, of which I had the great pleasure of adjudicating the final round, consisting of six one-act plays, one coming from each of the six areas of the British zone. The casts were all British civilians, of both sexes, and the audiences on both occasions were almost entirely British. There are, however, hopes that it may be possible to extend this most co-operative form of entertainment to include both British and Germans.

The conditions under which the finals were played were excellent, for there is a delightful little theatre at Herford, well equipped with good stage and lighting plant. For scenery, there was nothing available excepting some black tabs, and a couple of flats for door and window. However, with a cyclorama and ingenious lighting, the plays were put on very effectively. Two excellent programmes consisted of a new play by A. Fox Green—*The Door, How He Lied to Her Husband*, and *Four into Seven Wood's Go*, on the first night and on the second, *O'Flaherty, V.C.*, *Saint Simeon Stylites*, and another new play by a local author, Nigel Coles, *Distant Prospect*. The last three all showed quite outstanding merit, and all six showed careful rehearsal. The inequality was mainly in the skill in production, and here the Herford team scored, Joan Knight's production being both imaginative and smooth.

The playwriting competition was won by Nigel Coles, with another play of his. Here is a writer of whom more will be heard, I feel sure.

The winners of the acting competition were the Herford team in *Saint Simeon Stylites*. A shield was presented to them by the Director of Education, Mr. R. Birley.

After Impressions (written in the train)

The train moves out, hands wave—good-bye to Herford and all the crowding impressions of a three day visit to C.C.G. Headquarters. I settle down to think, to sort things out.

The Drama Festival. Somehow now I can see it all in focus. What an astonishing achievement! Jack Carlton told me there

were six drama groups in the entire British zone when he started on it. Thirty-six groups entered for the Festival. Six of them I saw, in the final round—one play from each area. Possibly another six almost as good played in the previous round, one area I know sent in five or six plays.

The standard was high. The plays all good, actable and exacting. The productions on the whole, wonderfully smooth. This was real entertainment. No concessions made to an audience composed of friends. It was a very critical audience. But it was also intelligent enough to accept the limited possibilities of mounting plays in these days, especially for those teams which came from a distance.

Goodness—the heat of this carriage . . . Where are we? Bockum. Mustn't let the sight of it get me down. Better think of something constructive.

The Drama Festival. What endless difficulties those players must have been up against. Keeping the cast together, in a shifting community, devising props, borrowing clothes. It's hard enough at home, but *out here*, with the dead weight of destruction and human despair hanging like a cloud, taking the *will* out of you unless you brace your mind against its influence. There's an important thought there, if I can get hold of it . . . Every bit of creative work done in Germany today is a positive contribution to the reconstruction of a sane Western Europe.

Where are we now? Dortmund . . . Beauty for ashes . . . This Drama festival means much more than an evening's amusement for an audience. More than weeks of slogging but fascinating work for the players and all those involved. It means a building up. The creation of something that is not concerned with the day to day struggle against the hard facts of life. Out here there *must* be some escape for the mind from this pressure—an escape not to inertia, but to vital, constructive occupation.

This is the biggest achievement of the Drama Festival. It created not only pleasure, but exhilaration, beauty, provocative thought and the deep satisfaction of work well done. Added to that, I have come away with the heartening conviction that my dream of first class amateur Drama is not a Will-o'-the-Wisp,—here and now, is the beginning . . .

Good gracious . . . the Hook.

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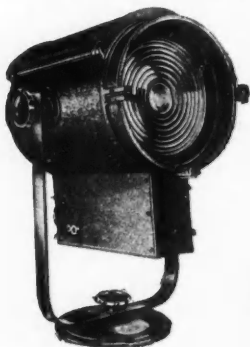
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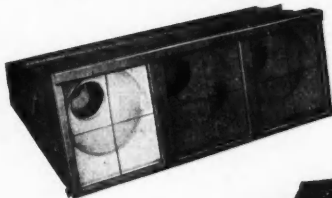
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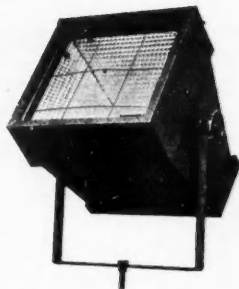
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